

STIRLING COUNCIL

MINUTES of MEETING of the ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING COMMITTEE held as a VIRTUAL MEETING via MICROSOFT TEAMS on THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2020 at 10.00 am

Present

Councillor Jim THOMSON (Convener)

Councillor Martin EARL	Councillor Alastair MAJURY
Councillor Danny GIBSON	Councillor Ross OXBURGH
Councillor Graham LAMBIE	Councillor Alasdair TOLLEMACHE
Councillor Susan MCGILL (Substitute)	Councillor Evelyn TWEED

In Attendance

Stephen Clark, Chief Officer - Housing
Christina Cox, Service Manager - Planning & Building Standards
Dan Hartles, Team Leader – Safer Communities
Angela Heaney, Senior Sustainable Development Officer - Infrastructure
Mark Henderson, Senior Media Officer - External Communications
Linda Hill, Regulatory Service Manager (Secondment) - Housing and Environment
David Hopper, Sustainable Development Manager - Environment & Place
Drew Leslie, Service Manager - Infrastructure
Julie Malcolm, Analyst - Communities & Performance
Gillian McKenzie, Accountant - Accounting Operations
Isabel McKnight, Chief Operating Officer, Communities & Performance
Kevin McCormick, Waste Services Manager - Environment & Place
Bruce Reekie, Senior Manager - Environment & Place
Brian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer – Infrastructure & Environment
Alexa Scrivener, Team Leader - Property Management Operations, Environment Services
Adrian Walters, Tree and Woodland Officer - Environment & Place
Gregor Wightman, Private Sector Housing Manager - Housing Services
Sheila McLean, Governance Officer – Governance (Clerk)
Mary Love, Committee Officer - Governance (Minutes)

EH215 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Alasdair MacPherson.

Councillor Susan McGill was in attendance as substitute for Councillor MacPherson.

EH216 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Martin Earl declared an interest in item EH228 - Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021/22 to 2025/26, as he was a Board Member, however, he could still participate in the decision making of this agenda item.

EH217 URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CONVENER

There were no items of urgent business.

EH218 MINUTES OF MEETING – 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Minutes of the Environment & Housing Committee Meeting held on 24 September 2020 were submitted for approval.

Decision

The Committee approved the Minutes of the Environment & Housing Committee Meeting held on 24 September 2020 as a correct record of proceedings.

EH219 ROLLING ACTION LOG

The following actions were agreed:-

EH114 – Report on Recent Deaths in Council Properties to be circulated to Members.

EH200 (EH191) – Briefing note on options available for cardless parking payment to be circulated to Members before end of January 2021.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the Rolling Action Log.

EH220 PERFORMANCE & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PROGRESS REPORT

A report by the Chief Operating Officer, Communities and Performance presented the latest information on the performance indicators overseen by the Environment & Housing Committee.

The Chief Operating Officer, Communities and Performance introduced the report and responded to a number of questions from Members.

Discussion took place around the increase of waste going to landfill and it was agreed that an update on figures since September 2020 would be provided to Councillor Tollemache.

Decision

Committee agreed to note the performance of reported indicators within the Committee Scorecard as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report.

(Reference: Report by Chief Operating Officer – Communities & Performance, dated 26 October 2020, submitted).

EH221 SAFER COMMUNITIES – ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

A report by the Senior Manager, Infrastructure provided an update to the Committee on enforcement action undertaken by the Safer Communities Team (SCT) between 1 August 2020 and 30 September 2020.

Discussion took place around the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) caseload information and it was noted that due to the current COVID-19 restrictions in place, ASB cases had increased on last year due to people being at home more than usual. However, it was noted that the figures were on track with other local authorities and on a national level.

The following actions were agreed during discussion:-

1. Breakdown of daily Penalty Charge Notices by ward to be considered for inclusion in future reports.
2. Additional information regarding revenue gained from Penalty Charge Notices to be sent to Members and included in future reports.
3. Information on how revenue spent to be circulated to Members.
4. Briefing for Members regarding Anti-Social Behaviour evidence thresholds to be arranged.
5. Update on Roads legislation guidance to be circulated to Members

Decision

Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Infrastructure, dated 23 November 2020, submitted)

EH222 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – PROJECTED OUTTURN 2020/21

A report by the Chief Officer – Housing noted that projected outturn for 2020/21 showed expenditure of £22.303M against a budget of £22.760M. The level of balances retained by the Housing Revenue account would remain at £986,000.

The 2020/21 Housing Investment Programme showed expenditure of £18.781M against a budget of £18.360M. The level of new borrowing required for the current year was £0.666M over budget at £7.573M.

The Chief Officer – Housing introduced the report and responded to questions from Members. Discussion took place around the impact of COVID-19 on house rental income, which was £0.398M under budget and it was noted that this information was based on information presented up to September 2020. It was also noted that the Estates Team were working with tenants who had asked for deferrals.

Decision

Committee agreed to note that:

1. expenditure on the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21 was projected to be £22.303M ;
2. the year-end retained balances were projected to remain at £986,000;

3. expenditure on the Housing Investment Programme was projected to be £18.781M; and
4. the borrowing requirement for 2020/21 was projected to be £7.573M.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer – Housing, dated 12 October 2020, submitted).

EH223 CONTROL OF DOGS IN PUBLIC PLAY PARKS

A report by the Senior Manager – Environment & Place provided an overview of the process in relation to the control of dogs in public play parks. In the first instance the report sought approval to consult on proposed changes to the Council's Park Management Rules (the "Rules") to introduce clearer controls in regard to the control of dogs in public play areas.

The Senior Manager – Environment & Place introduced the report and responded to questions from Members. Consultation with the public would provide feedback on the Council's Park Management Rules. Discussion took place regarding the content of the Rules and it was noted that other matters would be reviewed at a later stage.

Detailed discussion took place around the option of a byelaw to exclude dogs from enclosed public play parks and whether open consultation with members of the public would take place, in order to take account of their views. It was noted that the current rules presented were the first stage in the process and it was recognised that park management rules required to be tightened in terms of dog control and that a byelaw might be a consideration for the future.

Discussion then took place around the wording of recommendation 2 to the report and it was noted that, in order for officers to undertake a wider consultation process regarding other matters such as byelaws, which would require seeking legal advice, the recommendation would require to be amended to reflect this.

Decision

Committee agreed to:

1. note the current Rules regulating the presence of dogs in parks (Appendix 1); and
2. approve that officers consult on proposed amendments to the current Rules (Appendix 2).

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Environment & Place, dated 4 November 2020, submitted)

EH224 STIRLING COUNCIL HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION POLICY

A report by the Senior Manager – Environment & Place was presented to seek approval on a proposed Household Waste and Recycling Collection Policy to be implemented from February 2020. The proposed policy was included in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Convener advised Members that officers had requested that the item be deferred to a future Environment & Housing Committee meeting to allow for revision of the report content to be made.

Decision

Committee agreed to defer this item and bring back a revised report to a Special Meeting of the Environment & Housing Committee in January 2021.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Environment & Place, dated 23 October 2020, submitted)

EH225 SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING: SUSTAINABLE STIRLING ANNUAL REPORT, 2019-20, AND BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT, 2018-20

A report by the Senior Manager – Infrastructure noted that Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 introduced mandatory annual climate change reporting for public bodies to record progress in delivering their duties to reduce emissions, adapt to climate change and act sustainably while exercising their functions. In addition, the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 required public bodies to report every 3 years on their compliance with their duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. The reports would be submitted to Scottish Government through the appropriate channels.

The Sustainable Development Manager introduced the report and responded to a number of questions from Members.

In response to a Member question on the involvement of the voluntary sector within the Sustainable Stirling Partnership (SSP), it was noted that this was limited at this stage, although there were a number of organisations that were a part of this, however there was the need for this to grow and for more involvement from the voluntary sector to take place.

Although traditionally, no follow up discussion had taken place between councils and the Scottish Government following submission of this document, it was noted that relationships had since improved, as many councils and the Scottish Government had declared a formal recognition of Climate Emergency, which resulted in significant discussions taking place. The purpose of this document was to push councils to lay out the details of their emissions so that they could take action in an informed way.

Discussion took place around climate adaptation and it was noted that officers intended to carry out a risk and opportunities assessment which would look at this in more detail.

The Convener conveyed thanks to officers for producing the report.

The following actions were also agreed:-

1. Update on Biomass boiler issues to be sent to Councillor Earl.
2. Update on Aberfoyle Flood Alleviation Scheme to be discussed at Local Members Briefing in Callander next week.
3. Report on 2050-2100 storm projections to be circulated to Members.
4. Members Briefing on overall Flood Alleviation Schemes and specific projects to be arranged.
5. Update on energy tariff for Balfron High School and information on next phase of PPP programme to be sent to Members.

Decision

Committee agreed to:

1. approve the draft Sustainable Stirling 2019-20 report attached as Appendix 1 to the report; and
2. approve the draft Biodiversity Duty 2018-20 report attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Infrastructure, dated 23 November 2020, submitted).

EH226 CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN - UPDATE

A report by the Senior Manager, Infrastructure noted that in accordance with the decision made by Stirling Council in March 2020, the report provided an update to the Environment and Housing Committee regarding the progress with respect to development of the Climate Emergency Plan and its associated activities.

The Sustainable Development Manager introduced the report and responded to a number questions from Members.

Officers had worked diligently with external partners and government agencies to pull together a draft Climate Emergency Plan, guided by the Member Officer Group. A draft was now ready to go out to consultation with the wider public, which also included industry, commerce and all stakeholder groups. Officers were developing a platform to do this. A survey monkey was circulated, which provided very comprehensive responses. The document would go out for consultation in one week with a launch period, which would run over December and large part of January 2021. Feedback would then be collated and a final document would be presented at a future meeting of the Council in March 2021 for approval.

Members thanked officers for all their hard work regarding this plan.

Decision

Committee agreed to note the progress that has been made in regard to developing the Climate Emergency Plan, and the timeline of future actions.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager - Infrastructure, dated 23 November 2020, submitted)

EH227 TREE AND WOODLAND POLICY

The report by the Senior Manager, Environment and Place requested that the Tree and Woodland Policy be subject to a public consultation. The Tree and Woodland Policy identified the most common reasons Stirling Council was contacted concerning trees and woodlands on Council owned land and set out a decision-making framework around tree and woodland work to ensure transparency and consistency.

If agreed by Committee today, feedback from the public consultation would be incorporated into a finalised Tree and Woodland Policy, which would be brought back to the Environment and Housing Committee for approval in early 2021.

A group called Trees in Stirling had developed a framework to work with Stirling Council and carried out some great work, which was ongoing. Discussion took place around instances where the wrong trees were planted in the wrong locations and it was noted that narrative on Tree Works (Other) In the interest of Best (Arboricultural) Practice had been included in the policy, which would cover issues such as this. Although the need to work proactively was highlighted, it was noted that major financial challenges were a problem. Discussion took place around high hedges and in response to a Member question on how Stirling Council dealt with hedge applications, it was noted that this was primarily a function for Planning Services and was around land ownership and all applications were treated on a case by case basis, with officers treating each case as reasonably as possible.

Decision

Committee agreed to a public consultation on the Stirling Council Tree & Woodland Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Environment & Place, dated 20 November 2020, submitted).

EH228 STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2021/22 TO 2025/26

A report by the Chief Officer, Housing noting the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2021/22 to 2025/26 was presented to Committee for approval. It set out the strategic investment priorities for affordable housing across the Stirling Council area to achieve the outcomes set out in Stirling Council's Local Housing Strategy, which was approved by Stirling Council in December 2012.

The Chief Officer - Housing introduced the report and responded to various questions from Members.

Discussion took place around the content of the planned unit completions by housing providers and it was noted that land availability would increase since the last SHIP due to the expectation of land availability through Affordable Housing Policies.

It was noted that at least 5% of all new build properties would be fully wheelchair accessible within the next five years and private developers were being encouraged to do this. However, it was noted that this could not be enforced through planning or building standard regulations, although services would be continually raising this matter with developers in order to meet the needs of house buyers who required these adaptations.

Thanks were extended to the Chief Officer - Housing and his team on the huge effort put in to create and develop the SHIP and the challenges faced, during COVID-19 restrictions. This was echoed by the Chief Officer – Communities & Performance.

Discussion took place around new guidance for fire safety and sprinkler regulations which had recently been published, and it was noted that any building warrants submitted after March 2021 for social housing must have some means of fire suppression. It was also noted that units currently under development would be reviewed and where possible, upgraded.

Decision

Committee agreed to approve the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021/22 to 2025/26 for submission to the Scottish Government based on the projects identified in SHIP Tables set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer - Housing, dated 2 November 2020, submitted).

EH229 FENCING POLICY 2020

A report by the Chief Officer - Housing noted that the purpose of the policy was to provide clarity and determine when and to what specification fencing would be renewed, erected or repaired, to the garden ground of Council housing stock.

The Chief Officer - Housing introduced the report and responded to a number of questions. In response to a particular Member question around 1.8m fencing, it was noted that there were no fundamental changes with regard to using 1.8m fencing in relation to anti-social behaviour and all cases would be looked at individually and a decision made as appropriate to the circumstances surrounding this.

It was also clarified that if a Council garden bordered a footpath not adjacent to a road and the area was covered by the Fencing Policy, the Council would be responsible for replacing, erecting or maintaining any fencing in this area.

Decision

Committee agreed to approve the Fencing Policy.

(Reference: Report by Chief Officer - Housing, dated 15 October 2020, submitted).

The Committee resolved under Section 50A (4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 that the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

EH230 AWARD OF CO-MINGLED FOOD AND GARDEN WASTE HAULAGE AND TREATMENT TENDER

A report by the Senior Manager, Environment & Place noted that the tender exercise was concerned with the procurement of the services of a suitably licensed specialist Category 3 Waste treatment provider, including haulage services, to transport and treat approximately 10,000 tonnes of co-mingled food and garden waste per annum via industrial in-vessel composting.

The Waste Services Manager introduced the report and responded to a number of questions from Members.

Discussion took place around the expense associated with co-mingled waste and it was noted that going forward, the Service would look at moving away from co-mingled waste as an option.

Decision

Committee agreed to approve the award of the Co-mingled Food and Garden Waste Haulage and Treatment contract to the most economically advantageous bidder, based on the completed commercial and technical evaluations, as set out within the Award Recommendation Report.

(Reference: Report by Senior Manager – Environment & Place, dated 4 November 2020, submitted)

The Convener declared the Meeting closed at 12.35pm